

The Carmichael vision and training reform: Some insights from across the Tasman

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This paper provides insights into aspects of trans--Tasman union influences in the 1980s and early 1990s. In particular, it examines Laurie Carmichael's influence on New Zealand unions, especially with respect to education and training reforms. The paper traces how his influence grew as the relationship between the AMWU and the NZEU warmed through the 1980s. It also highlights the very major impact *Australia Reconstructed* had on thinking in New Zealand as unions struggled to respond to neo-liberal policies and practices of the Fourth labour Government. The paper finds that the New Zealand reception of Australian ideas reflected, at least in part, the limitations of the left intellectual tradition in New Zealand.

Introduction and purpose

This paper is one of a series that examines unions and education and training reform in New Zealand (eg Law, 1996; 1998; Piercy, 1999). The overarching purpose of our project is to track and analyse, from a labour studies perspective, trade union approaches to education and training reform since the mid-1980s. One important facet of the research has been an attempt to document and understand better Australian union influences on key New Zealand unions and unionists.

The context, of course, has been New Zealand neo-liberal experiment (Kelsey, 1993; Jesson, 1989), In education, economic and social restructuring resulted in radical changes to both schooling and 'post-compulsory' education. This ideologically driven push for a consumer oriented, market approach to lifelong learning has challenged fundamentally the democratic assumptions that have characterised the welfare state educational settlement that most working people and their unions took for granted (Olssen and Morris Mathews, 1997). Something similar has taken place in Australia. Thus over the past two years or so, Simon Marginson's (1997) scholarly analysis of patterns in that country have provided invaluable insights that have helped us understand better 'markets and education' in New Zealand.

One intrinsically fascinating line of inquiry is the role played by unions in the education and training reforms on both sides of the Tasman. As those close to the action in either country are well aware, both countries' central union bodies and a number of key unions have been enthusiastic supporters of the general thrust of those reforms, especially with respect to industry training and skills formation. In the case of New Zealand, that interest and influence was very evident in the Labour Party's 1999 election policy. Yet the education literature pays very little attention to the two union movements' involvement or the ideological and strategic thinking that underpinned it (eg Marginson, 1997; Olssen and Morris Mathews, 1997). Nor, quite surprisingly, is there much discussion in the industrial relations literature and what is there tends to be quite sweeping (eg Kitay and Lansbury, 1997; Boxall and Haynes, 1997).

Attention to New Zealand union strategies and influence is long overdue. Those close to the union movement have long known that those strategies and the thinking that underpinned them have been heavily indebted to the labour process and skills formation debates in Australia. But while obvious links could be made between documents published and strategies adopted, the analysis suffered for want of field based research. Thus Piercy's (1999) thesis research provided a unique opportunity to explore in more depth trans-Tasman influences.

A recurring theme that emerged from that study was the pivotal role of Laurie Carmichael on the strategic thinking and practices of unions and unionists on both sides of the Tasman mainly, but not narrowly, with respect to education and training reform. While in general this will come as no surprise to those close to unions, especially the metal unions, what was a little surprising to us was the emphasis placed on his vision as well as his actions. Thus the purpose of this paper is to identify and explore, from a New Zealand perspective, the Carmichael vision and its influence on New Zealand unionists' strategies.

The primary data sources are 22 interviews with unionists and others conducted by Piercy in 1998 and Law's interview with Carmichael in October, 1998 (Piercy, 1999). We have also drawn insights from an earlier interview between Law and Carmichael (early 1995), a continuing series of informal discussions with Australian and New Zealand informants that date from late 1989, and a recent discussion (November, 1999) between Law and Pat Kelly.

Unions, education and the welfare state: An historical and theoretical note

In Australia and New Zealand, tripartism has long been a cornerstone of the welfare state compromise. Governments worked with employers and unions, as *social partners*, in formulating and implementing economic and social policies designed to achieve the central goals of welfare capitalism: economic growth, full employment, a steady rise in the standard of living, and the moderate reformation of work in order to humanise, within limits, production. In education, these goals implied policies that:

- integrated working people as citizens in the modern state;
- satisfied their educational expectations for themselves and their children; and
- accommodated employers' desire to have the state bear the cost of training and retraining the workforce.

Unions in New Zealand were generally comfortable with these arrangements. They were represented on the appropriate industry craft, trade, and professional bodies that oversaw training and on national policy bodies, such as the Vocational Training Council. The provision of formal vocational education was delivered by publicly owned and funded bodies, principally polytechnics, with unions represented, in small numbers, on their governing bodies. In addition, unions had modest access to state funding for trade union education through a Trade Union Training Board (1975-1986) and, later, a more expanded Trade Union Education Authority (1986-1992) (Law, 1996, 1997).

In return for their recognition as social partners, unions had to accept a measure of control over their constitutions and over the nature and scope of their activities. In summary, they operated within the framework of a regulated industrial relations system that looked to conciliation and compulsory arbitration as the means of reconciling conflict. Workers themselves were seldom active participants in all of this. By and large they occupied prescribed, fixed roles in their workplace and in their union. Industrial rights mirrored social rights: unions 'looked after' workers in their employment and the state 'looked after' them in society more generally. All of this 'worked' not only because of the undeniable achievements of reformism but also because New Zealand unions had learned, sometimes quite painfully, that the state, even when Labour held office, was prepared, if necessary, to curb forcefully union militancy.

In New Zealand, as elsewhere, the 1970s saw the deepening crisis of welfare capitalism erode the foundations of the welfare state compromise. In some countries those tensions were compounded by workers' militant attempts to break out of the 'Tayloristic' model of workplace organisation. In New Zealand, with its much smaller industrial sector, such protests were generally fairly muted, whereas in Australia such militancy was more widespread, especially in the metal industries (Carmichael interview).

The Australian political economy debate

Peter Beilharz (1994) has documented in some detail the role of Australian Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union (AMWU) as a "vital actor" in the radical, alternative political economy debate in Australia that eventually resulted in the 1983 in a 'Prices and Incomes Accord' between the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Australian Labor Party (ALP). With the publication of its *The people's budget* in 1976, the AMWU, Beilharz's claims 'began to produce something which the Australian labour movement had arguably never had before--a think-tank and a source of modernising intellectuals who also could advocate a new historic compromise between labour and manufacturing' (p. 115).

Most interested Australians, but not necessarily many New Zealanders, will be familiar with the three further important AMWU publications that preceded the 'Accord': *Australia uprooted* (1977), *Australia ripped-off* (1979), and *Australia on the rack* (1982). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider the details of that debate, two aspects of it are relevant. First, as Carmichael himself emphasised emphatically and repeatedly in his interview with Law, without an intimate

knowledge of that debate, it is difficult if not impossible to understand the AMWU's strategic thinking and, more specifically, the significance of *Australia Reconstructed* (1987). Second, with only two exceptions, Piercy found little awareness among her New Zealand interviewees of the 1970s, Australian political economy debate. Some even thought that the Australian 'uprooted', 'ripped-off', 'on the rack' trilogy were written after *Australia Reconstructed*.

Without attempting to provide a total explanation, our research suggests that the lack of a strong left intellectual culture coupled with divisions and fixed political alignments on the left hampered New Zealand unionists following more closely the Australian debate that led to the Accord:

In retrospect, the differences between the political Left in the two countries and the left wings of their respective union movements help explain New Zealand unions' attitude to Australian 'solutions'--award restructuring, education and training reform, and workplace reform--in the late 1980s. On the one hand, many were initially very cool towards the 'Accord' model and also proved to be ill-prepared when confronted by 'Rogernomics.' On the other hand, once they embraced the Australian strategies, most did so with only a limited understanding of the ideological and strategic thinking that underpinned those strategies.

It is against this background, we suggest, that Laurie Carmichael, his vision, and the AMWU's policies and personalities came to have such a significant influence on sections of the New Zealand union movement from around 1984-5.

The Carmichael vision

Its location in a tradition

Beilharz (1994, p. 201) underscores Carmichael's pivotal importance: "the development of Laurie Carmichael's own policies from communism to modernising labourism" was a "striking indicator" of a process of transformation that saw "the fixed sense of the labourist-communist utopia where individuals would have fixed identities--a metalworker, say, for life in the Keynesian scenario--became replaced by the multi-skilled image of the 1990s." However, we suggest that a weakness in Beilharz's analysis is his failure to locate Carmichael within the long tradition of adult education that emphasises working class enlightenment that Australia, like New Zealand, substantially derived from Britain (eg Simon, 1990).

Carmichael (interview) himself taps quite directly into that tradition, not through its literature, but through his identification with Tom Mann. Carmichael believes that education, in the richest sense, is deeply ingrained within the tradition of metalwork unions. His "hero" is Mann, a turn-of-the-century British socialist and unionist who worked for some time as an organiser and educator in Australia and New Zealand: "he was a miracle of a man so far as I'm concerned." Carmichael sees Mann as a worker who grew and developed throughout life. A kid who started off pulling a sledge of coal in a mine, who then went on and completed an apprenticeship, and who, around age 27, "just flowered and changed." What especially appeals to Carmichael was the fullness of Mann's education, in the broadest sense. He refers to Mann's interest in Shakespeare and in science and how, when Mann was working as a Labour Party and Socialist Party organiser in Australia, he "set up a debating society, he set up a choir, he had this Sunday School for young trade unionists, he had Sunday night lectures at the Bijou Theatre."

The point here, which needs to be made emphatically because it is seldom present in academic, especially industrial relations, commentaries on Carmichael's role in education and training reform, is that for him, people like Mann represent the potential of all worker-learners. His critique of education is grounded in a belief that traditional vocational education, in combination with Taylorism, fixed identities and locked workers in general and specific types of workers in particular, especially women, immigrants, and the unskilled, into intellectual as well as employment cul-de-sacs.

Carmichael (interview) recalls that in the early 1970s, he and other key officials in the AMWU began to link issues of education with those of power in the workplace. In a broader sense, some of this questioning was prompted by increasing workplace hostility to 'Taylorism.' Ogden (interview) also notes how "Carmichael, myself, and some others, perhaps not enough of us, were very much influenced by the whole post-Fordist development." What gave the AMWU "think tank's" questioning a sharper focus was the growing view that Australian industry needed to be reformed. Carmichael says that he began to examine the "dichotomy between vocational education and general

education". He adds that "the more I looked at it and studied it historically, you came to the conclusion that one was related to power and the other was related to subject". Carmichael continues, "overcoming this dichotomy seemed to me to be a crucial historical phenomenon." This led to the conclusion that technological change was inevitable and that "the question was how to facilitate it." Out of this awareness grew a recognition of the need for an industry policy that associated "high value, high tech, high pay... with high levels of training and education." Drawing a line of continuity, Carmichael states that these concerns "were quite fundamental to me in relation to the Accord" and, within the framework of the Accord, the overseas mission that resulted in the publication of a document that was to have a profound impact in New Zealand, *Australia Reconstructed* (1987). Carmichael makes no apologies for the Accord, which many now criticise as an unsuccessful corporatist experiment:

I went into the Accord quite deliberately....it enabled us to go for...industry development policy, because Australia had become committed to two resource booms...and we had been running Australia's manufacturing sector down, low value added stuff, low tech stuff....The second thing was to pursue a social wage strategy alongside of an industrial wage strategy....and the third was in relation to using the immediate situation to broaden the whole perspective of vocational education so that the convergence of general vocational education could emerge and draw the whole of the working class in for learning.

Australia Reconstructed

Described as "the ACTU's blueprint for modernising the Australian economy" (Brown, 1997, p. 76), *Australia Reconstructed* reported on a joint union-Australian Trade and Development Council (TDC) mission to several European countries. The report "advocated policies on investment, industry, and education and training modelled on the north European economies' 'consensual approach'" (Brown, 1997, p. 76). Beilharz (1994) dwells on the report's left credentials. He notes that while it drew primarily on Swedish ideas, it also reflected the influence of an ex-communist thinker, Winton Higgins. Beilharz's suggestion of a CPA legacy is consistent with Carmichael's (interview) comment that Ted Wilshire, who also wrote *Australia ripped-off* and co-wrote *Australia on the rack*, "did the writing." It is also consistent with Chris Lloyd's (interview) insistence that it is incorrect to regard *Australia Reconstructed* as a source document "for what became or what was award restructuring."

Carmichael (interview) tends to support the view that the exercise was really one of winning support from within the union movement for a strategy to which the AMWU was already committed. He says he "wanted an exclusively trade union (mission) because the fight was inside the labour movement." Thus the mission deliberately comprised representatives from both the right and the left of the union movement "because," Carmichael adds, "the left was just as big a bloody problem as the right!" Although there is a tendency to dismiss the lasting impact of *Australia Reconstructed*, its section on the labour market and training policies is seen by some commentators to have had a continuing significance (Ewer, 1997; Goozee, 1993).

The ACTU-TDC mission had been approved by John Dawkins, then Minister of Trade. Later in 1987, following its re-election, the Australian Labor Government released *Skills for Australia*, popularly known as the Dawkins' report. By this time, Dawkins was Minister for Employment, Education and Training. While *Australia Reconstructed* may have fallen into a hole soon after its publication, several writers (eg Beilharz, 1994; Welch, 1996) note how the Dawkins' report reiterated arguments presented in *Australia Reconstructed* with respect to international competitiveness, dependence on skills and innovation, the importance of quality, and the need for a highly trained, flexible workforce. Carmichael himself claims that ACTU Secretary, Bill Keltey, and Prime Minister, Paul Keating, subsequently came to a "tacit agreement ... to play the whole thing down." But it may be an error, however, to underestimate the lasting influence of *Australia Reconstructed* within the union movement itself. Other interviewees, especially those involved with the Australian union movement in the mid- to late-80s, refer frequently to the interrelationship between the ACTU-TDC mission's report, strategic unionism, award restructuring, workplace reform, and industrial training. And it is in this sense that *Australia Reconstructed* came to be regarded in New Zealand as a central, benchmark document.

Shaping education and training policy

Carmichael claims that Dawkins' appointment as Minister gave him the opportunity "to have an impact inside the education arena." However he takes no credit for influencing Dawkins' thinking: "I mean the strange thing about it was that Dawkins' agenda and my agenda just fitted like a bloody hand in a glove, except that I had longer term visions." This relationship with Dawkins resulted in Carmichael acquiring a pivotal role in the reform process, initially as ACTU Assistant Secretary and, later, as a full time political appointee chairing key bodies.

According to Lloyd (interview) it was around 1987/88 that Carmichael began to pull together "the idea of benchmarking wage levels to skill, broadbanding existing grades into those wage skill areas and arguing that that should lead to an increase in the training time or the training investment." Carmichael (interview) recalls that he saw that "the classification structure of awards" that was developing as part of the award restructuring process provided unions with a basis to tackle the broader agenda of training reform and to encourage the convergence of general and vocational education. He took this idea into the "Finn Committee" (Australian Education Council Review Committee, 1991) where, he recalls, there was widespread agreement. It was later carried into the 'Carmichael Report' (Employment and Skills Formation Council, 1992) and from there into the implementation of that report's recommendations. A central goal of the 'Carmichael Report' and the training system and certification it recommended was to ensure that every youth under the age of 19 would achieve qualifications that gave them a passport to any post-compulsory training they wished to pursue (Goozee, 1993).

By 1988, Carmichael's post-Taylorist vision of the skilled worker went far beyond the very narrow notion of 'competency' that has come to characterise much of the new training framework that was eventually introduced into New Zealand. In a lecture to the Footscray Polytechnic, which a key New Zealand unionist, Paul Tolich (interview) identified as particularly significant, Carmichael (1988) discusses the need for work organisation to be changed and for the "skilling of the workforce ... to be broadened in a number of principal dimensions" (p. 14). He suggests a "skilling synthesis" which incorporates multi-skilling in both the technical or dexterous sense and in the "cognitive, interpersonal communication and self management decision making sense" as well as group skills in the vertical, 'soft ware,' and "community welfare" senses. This implies, he argues, an assessment of skill that extends beyond the "mere mechanical accumulation of 'fixed' skills or a segment of 'like' skills" (p. 15) which in turn requires a "convergence of general education and vocation" (p. 16). The purpose, which is underlined in the text, is a matter of achieving industrial democracy or participation as a real force in production and service in which increasing skill and education is a vital dimension of that participation. (p. 17).

In summary, this section has attempted to locate Carmichael's vision within a broader context: the alternative political economy debate of the 1970s and early 1980s; the AMWU's reform initiative within the corporatist framework of the Accord; and the continuing influence of *Australia Reconstructed* on education and training reform. It also has sketched how Carmichael carried some of the central ideas in that report into a series of key government reports. Of course, there is much more to the story. Mathews (1989), for example, provides a comprehensive overview of the links between skills formation, award restructuring, and workplace reform while Beilharz (1994) and Brown (1997) address some of the compromises that resulted as pressure built in the early 1990s for a loosening of labour market regulation and an acceleration of enterprise bargaining.

The influence of Australian unions on New Zealand unions*The metal unions' relationship with each other*

The AMWU and the NZEU share a common heritage. Both grew out of colonial branches of the British Amalgamated Society of Engineers that were established throughout Australia and New Zealand in the latter half of the nineteenth century. But notwithstanding many similarities in terms of origins, membership, and industrial interests, the two unions came to occupy quite different places within the labour movement. By the 1970s, the AMWU was well established as one of Australia's 'left' unions with several members of the Australian Communist Party prominent in its leadership (Beilharz, 1994). In New Zealand, the NZEU was viewed as being quite right-wing: a strong advocate of the arbitration system and a powerful and conservative affiliate of the Labour Party.

Until late 1983, the relationship between the two unions was fairly distant (Jones and Ogden interviews). However, each union still sent fraternal delegates to the other's conferences and there were close personal links, based on a degree of political identification, between some regional NZEU officials, particularly in Auckland, and their Australian counterparts (Eichbaum interview). And the NZEU often picked up AMWU campaigns, such as the 35 hour week in 1981 (Eichbaum interview). The election of Rex Jones as National Secretary in 1983 provided the basis for a closer relationship. His election also coincided with a general political realignment among unions affiliated to the Labour Party.

Early Carmichael links with New Zealand

It is hard to document with precision the history of Carmichael's influence in New Zealand, although his connections, primarily with communist party(ies) associated unionists certainly date back into the 1960s. One New Zealand unionist with whom he had quite close links was Pat Kelly. In the 1970s, Kelly was the advocate of the combined unions in the Wellington motor assembly plants. He also joined the Labour Party and by the mid-1980s had become president of its affiliates' council. Kelly (personal communication) confirms that he knew Carmichael through the communist movement, but it was the development of the 'world car' concept in the late 1970s that brought them closer together.

Kelly had heard Carmichael speak at a major conference on multi-nationals held in Sydney in the early 1970s and remained in contact. Kelly claims that by the mid-1970s, Carmichael's stature on the broad left was well established internationally: "he was regarded as the pre-eminent working class intellectual." Around 1981/82, Kelly invited Carmichael over twice to be the keynote speaker at major conferences on the future of the motor industry. He recalls Carmichael telling him that what was taking place in New Zealand "was exciting because it was about a direct intervention in the multi-nationals' agenda--which was Lauries' bent at the time." Significantly, given the shifts that were later to take place in the Engineers' Union, Kelly recalls that both Jones and Mike Sweeney, another Auckland based NZEU official, were very enthusiastic about the conferences, excited by Carmichael's contribution, and worked tirelessly to secure and galvanise worker participation.

Kelly helped carry the Carmichael influence into the Labour Party. Mike Smith (interview and personal communications), the Party's Trade Union Liaison Officer at the time and now, an NZEU official recalls how the composition of the affiliates' council shifted from the 'Catholic right' to 'the moderate left' in the 1980s. He also recalls inviting, at Kelly's suggestion, Carmichael to address a meeting of the council¹. At that gathering the view was expressed that trans-Tasman union co-operation needed to be fostered because of the links that were being developed between the two economies as a result of the Closer Economic Relations (CER) agreement. Smith subsequently distributed widely copies of Carmichael's address and still keeps it close at hand. As a personal footnote, it is worth recalling that it was also Kelly who strongly recommended to Law that he meet and "listen bloody carefully to" Carmichael when he visited Australia in early 1985 as part of an inquiry into trade union education.

Although Carmichael himself has lost track of the visits he made to New Zealand, he recalls in general terms that his later visits were part of an attempt by unions to develop a response to 'Rogernomics.' And he specifically remembers that "there was one night in Wellington where I had a real stand-up fight with a bloody Trotskyist."

The impact of the Australian political economy debate

In a sense, much of what has been sketched above evidences some ripple influence of the AMWU-inspired political economy debate. But while it seems that scattered unionists--Eichbaum, Kelly, Tolich--were familiar with it, there is no substantial evidence that the AMWU publications were read widely in New Zealand until after the publication of *Australia Reconstructed*. Chris Eichbaum (interview), who was employed by the Engineer's Union in Auckland as an education officer and then as assistant national secretary from 1980 until 1989, recalls that there was some awareness of the work of the AMWU 'think tank' member, Ted Wilshire (also see Beilharz, 1994). But he also observes that in the early 1980s, much of the debate within the New Zealand union movement was on "the big ticket

¹ Smith dates this as 1986, but Carmichael's address (undated) implies that it may have been early 1987.

items:” wage fixing structures, the removal of the wage-prize freeze, and the case for a negotiated economy.

Eichbaum recalls that prior to Labour’s election in 1984, some people “were trying to promote within the broader New Zealand labour movement some positive consideration of an incomes-prices agreement not dissimilar to the ALP-ACTU Accord” but in the end these initiatives faltered. A core problem, which was anticipated by then union economists, Rob Campbell and Alf Kirk (1983), in their discussion of the Accord in *After the freeze*, was the general lack of acceptance in New Zealand that wages policy had to be seen as “part of economic policy, including social policy” (p. 41). In informal discussions since the completion of Piercy’s thesis, Margaret Wilson, a former president of the Labour Party, has referred to the agenda of Labour MPs, such as Roger Douglas, Mike Moore, and associates. Kelly also points to the relative weakness of the New Zealand union movement: “compared to the Australians, we were like *Oliver Twist*; what scraps can we have?”

With respect to education and training, Eichbaum suggests that in the early 1980s “the link hadn’t been made [in New Zealand] between issues of macro economic policy, central policy at Ministry level, and what was happening in terms of particular enterprises and skills training (and) productivity.” The NZEU, he observes, had long participated actively in the structures that governed craft training, but this had not been seen within the union as part of “the cutting edge.” Paul Tolich (interview), a union official who worked for some time with TUEA on workplace reform and who is now with the NZEU, suggests that technological change and deregulation gave some impetus to thinking about education and training. However, it was not until the government moved, with some caution, onto labour market reform that alarm bells started to ring in the union movement..

Labour market reform and job losses as the impetus for change

In 1986, the Labour Government began a Green and White paper exercise that resulted in the 1987 Labour Relations Act. From then, labour market policies began to challenge very directly the sustainability and viability of national awards. According to Eichbaum, the NZEU had recognised quite early the “merits of strategic unionism in terms of its macro level importance” and that this represented a “continuation of the kinds of argument that had been run pre-1984” about the possibility of a “New Zealand type accord.” But it was not until unions had to address the sustainability of national awards that “the enterprise level issues, including vocational education and training, became squarely on the agenda.” As industrial relations reform debate took shape, Eichbaum recalls “increasingly we came to the view that if we were going to be able to retain award structures, then those awards had to be far more responsive to the needs of employers and our members than they were.”

Although it is hard to pin dates down with precision, the other significant factor that prompted the NZEU to think outside the square was job loss in the manufacturing sector. By the mid-1980s, this was generating very serious membership concerns which were picked up when Eichbaum undertook the first of a series of membership surveys which helped focus the NZEU on skills development. Smith (interview) recalls that the survey revealed that “the top concern of our members was job security.” Peter Chrisp (interview), another NZEU educator at the time, echoes this point: (the survey was) “one of those watershed points for the union, at least when the agenda got switched over ... the number one concern for our workers was job security and we had to look ourselves in the eye and say what we were doing about job security.”

Australia Reconstructed and the later Carmichael influence

As noted above, Carmichael occupies an iconic place in New Zealand union mythology. His clear thinking, articulateness, and bluntness have long appealed. But we infer that much of his credibility with quite a broad spectrum of older New Zealand unionists is that he is seen to bridge, in a principled way that remains grounded in a Marxian analysis, the transition from traditional left politics to modern unionism. However it was *Australia Reconstructed* and the cross-Tasman activity that followed its publication and reception in New Zealand that linked Carmichael with a new generation of union officials.

Memories are unreliable, but it is evident that around the time key NZEU officials encountered *Australia Reconstructed*, they were actively thinking about the need to free up awards and introduce more comprehensive training regimes (Jones, interview). Certainly for central actors like

Eichbaum, who was more familiar than most New Zealand unionists with the Australian political economy debate, the importance of *Australia Reconstructed* pulled together a number of issues with which the NZEU was already wrestling. He notes that once the concept of strategic unionism “started to filter through here, there was actually a strong organic connection established between training, industrial democracy, award restructuring, industry policy and the whole kind of macro economic strategy.”

According to Eichbaum, other unions in New Zealand were “sceptical of what was coming out of Australia” with some “very influential forces ... opposed to anything that smacked of corporatism.” However in 1988, the NZEU sponsored its own mission to Australia. It included representatives from other significant unions, such as the distribution union and the service workers. Significantly, Eichbaum recalls that Ted Wilshire, then with the TDC, organised the itinerary. He notes that the New Zealand mission was “an attempt on the part of the engineers’ union essentially to try and encourage a much wider sense of ownership with that agenda both within the ranks of employers (and) within the ranks of other unions.”

The NZEU mission appears to have led to a succession of individual unions sending mini-study tours to Australia. And while the general pattern seems to be one of like-to-like union links, the AMWU was on most trans-Tasman visitors’ calling list. A number of interviewees recall participating in Australian Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) seminars on award restructuring, training reform, and workplace reform and spending numerous seminars and workshops with people like Lloyd and Ogden. Lloyd himself recollects a succession of delegations from New Zealand visiting the AMWU from around 1988. According to Stephanie Doyle (interview), at the time an education with the New Zealand Trade Union Education Authority (TUEA), this traffic increased after the National Government was elected at the end of 1990.

In summary, while people like Eichbaum saw *Australia Reconstructed* as the end of a project or phase of a project, for others in the New Zealand union movement it was a point of entry into the increasingly fashionable world of award restructuring, training, and, in the early 1990s, workplace reform. Chrisp claims that he “photocopied 178 copies ... and bound them in cardboard and sent round the place with ‘must read’ written on it. I actually went to Lake Waikaremoana and read it with a highlighter.” Chrisp says that from his viewpoint the earlier AMWU documents were “hardly influential at all compared to *Australia Reconstructed*.” A little later he adds:

once...that document came out, all of a sudden...[there were] real ways in which you could start selling the ideas. And the ideas were sort of sucked in New Zealand because they filled such an important vacuum, because we were desperately finding a new agenda with the employers to talk on.

As Tolich (interview) sums it up, for New Zealanders: “*Australia Reconstructed*...is probably the seminal work...[which] got us all involved in it.”

As these unionists engaged *Australia Reconstructed*, they encountered Carmichael personally. Chrisp states that “Laurie Carmichael was hugely important to my understanding ...” He recalls one visit to Australia:

I went to a workshop about '89 and there were about ten of us in a room. We spent a couple of days together and Laurie Carmichael was one of them, Jenny George was there....We just workshopped, paper on the walls that sort of stuff....I learnt huge amounts just by being involved in that process....I wasn't the only person bringing it back to New Zealand....Mike Smith [and others] were all bringing it back as well. Max Ogden was brought out a couple of times and he was bringing the ideas over as well.

This quote also shows how, as the relationship between the NZEU and the AMWU developed, the network extended, with Lloyd, Ogden and Greg Pettiana eventually becoming major points of contact..

Finally, there is one other important aspect of the Carmichael vision with respect to education and training reform that needs to be noted: his strong sense of equity. Eichbaum acknowledges that Carmichael was “absolutely driven” by equity issues and that:

a number of us here increasingly over time also saw that....process workers tended to be low paid, tend to be more women, more Maori, Pacific Island process workers and without exception they were systematically excluded from the benefits that accrued from the credential training that tradesmen in main had been able to access. So there was

a view increasingly that the trade or an apprenticeship was the province of the young white male.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to begin to document the impact of Carmichael and his vision on New Zealand unionists and their strategies, especially with respect to education and training reform. Elsewhere, Piercy (1999) has established that in part, perhaps a large part, the adoption of Australian ideas was a defensive reaction. Confronted with labour market deregulation, most unions and unionists came to *Australia Reconstructed* on the rebound. We have also attempted to show that despite the limitations of the left intellectual tradition in New Zealand, scattered individuals had prepared some of the groundwork needed for New Zealand unions to engage actively the Australian strategies. While the focus of the paper has been on Carmichael, the general thrust of our research findings suggest that there is scope for much more work on the evolving patterns and future prospects of trans-Tasman union links.

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